An important educational funding renewal will appear on the November 3 election ballot.

The Wayne County Educational Enhancement Millage is a 2-mill RENEWAL request that would continue to generate approximately $5 million per year, for six years, for Livonia Public Schools. The request would allow LPS to continue to enhance its educational offerings for its 14,000 students.

Why the request?
Under Proposal A, local school districts cannot seek additional funding for operations, through a local millage. However, the state does allow Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) to place enhancement millage requests on the ballot. In Wayne County, the requesting body is the Wayne County Regional Educational Services Agency, known as Wayne RESA.

The LPS Board of Education unanimously supported placing this issue on the ballot for renewal, after careful and thoughtful study.

If approved, all districts in the county would continue to receive essential funding at the rate of approximately $300 per student, for education in the high priority areas identified by each school district.

In LPS, the high priority areas include: hiring and retaining high quality staff; preserving and enhancing programs for students; lowering class sizes; supporting struggling learners who have added needs; and ensuring financial stability for the district.

The monies raised by the millage would continue to be subject to independent financial audits, in order to provide additional transparency for taxpayers.

This millage has been truly impactful on our district! The following list of supports are just some examples of what LPS has been able to implement with the enhancement millage since its first passage in November 2016:

- Increased academic and social/emotional support for at-risk students.
- Lowered class size across all elementary grades and in targeted areas at the secondary level.
- Increased student academic and social-emotional intervention for our learners.
- Additional full-time student support staff (EST) over the past three years in grades K-6, and increased student assistance provider support in grades 7-12.
- More than $3.5 million in updated textbook and instructional materials since the 2017-18 school year.
- Increased special offerings for students: Enhanced STEM pathway courses via Project Lead the Way (PTLW); Theatre Tech Class; Boys & Girls Bowling; Boys & Girls Lacrosse.
- High quality, job-embedded professional development and support through five additional Literacy Coaches at the K-4 level & three Instructional Coaches for Upper Elementary.
- Added special education resource providers, occupational therapy, speech therapy, school social workers, and two district-wide behavior support teachers to enhance the support for our students with unique needs.
- Snap & Read program access for all students and staff, used for leveled reading, word prediction, and foreign language translation.
- Purchased nine 77-passenger buses and one garage truck, plus three maintenance trucks, replacing decades-old vehicles.
- Hired additional custodial and transportation staff.
- Enhanced technology integration and support via our I.T. Department.

“It is amazing to review all of the things we have been able to do to support our students, our staff, and our schools with these millage funds over the past few years,” said Superintendent Andrea Oquist. “Just to be able to focus our resources on targeted areas where we know they will make the greatest impact has been tremendous, and has certainly served our students well on their educational journey.”

For more information, please visit www.resa.net/community.

QUICK FACTS
November 3 ballot
Wayne RESA Education Enhancement Millage

- 2-mill RENEWAL no increase or new money
- Six-year duration
- About $8 per month for owner of $100K home
- Maintains financial stability
- For all Wayne County districts, on per-pupil basis
- Independently audited
Greetings LPS Community,

To see the smiling eyes of a kindergartener and know there is the biggest, brightest smile under that decorative mask… To see our brilliant yellow school buses rolling up and down our bustling community streets… To see our students walk confidently into our schools for the first time in 210 days, and the excited staff waiting to greet each and every child… There are no words to express just how proud I am of our school community. We are coming through this extraordinary time, together, with the grace and pride that defines us even in “normal” times.

When I think about the past seven months, I continue to return to the word “perseverance.” Upon learning of the COVID-19 virus in mid-March, our district took immediate steps to protect our students, staff, and families by closing our schools. Soon thereafter, all schools across the state and most of the country were also closing. There were literally hundreds of details to quickly address in our district, as we knew our students needed to continue their learning, even if we couldn’t be with them in person.

Our LPS staff and families pressed on. A plan was developed to provide even some semblance of normalcy for our students during this uncertain and frankly, quite scary time. As weeks and months progressed, our LPS family didn’t stop or pause. We continued to respond to the changing environment, from planning unique celebrations for our Class of 2020 to planning millions of dollars.

Just as homeowners look to refinance their homes in order to save interest costs over the life of their mortgage, Livonia Public Schools recently took advantage of favorable rates in the bond market - a move that will save LPS taxpayers millions of dollars.

The $195 million bond issue to renovate all 23 schools in the district was approved by voters in May 2013. A constant monitoring of the bond market and diligent fiscal policies recently resulted in a refinancing of bond debt that will save $14.8 million in interest for our taxpayers.

“As we have done in the past, we continue to work with our financial advisor to monitor the market and take advantage of lower interest rates whenever we can, to save our taxpayers money and to be good stewards of the funds entrusted to the district,” said LPS Finance Director Alison Smith. “When the opportunity presented itself to realize millions of dollars worth of savings by refinancing the 2013 Bond Series I and 2014 Refunding Bonds, we worked with our financial advisors to realize $14.8 million of savings. While this money doesn’t come back to the district, it does reduce our future debt retirement costs, which translates to savings for our taxpayers.”

In preparation for the sale of the bonds, the district underwent a credit rating review through Standard & Poors, which confirmed Livonia Public Schools’ credit rating of “A.” This favorable rating was issued with the rationale that LPS has strong fiscal practices, cost containment measures, and a healthy fund balance, among other factors.

“A significant priority for our district administration and Board of Education is to be responsible and careful stewards of the district funds entrusted to us. We are fortunate to have the ongoing support of our community, and are very pleased to significantly reduce the interest costs and tax burden for our local taxpayers, both residents and businesses, by almost $15 million,” shares Andrea Oquist, superintendent of Livonia Public Schools.

The school district’s financing was conducted by PFM Financial Advisors and the law firm that serves as bond counsel, Thrun Law Firm, P.C.
BACK TO SCHOOL 2020
What a great start to this very unusual school year!

Our fully online Livonia Virtual program is in full swing, and our in-person students began returning to our schools during the week of October 5! We are so proud of our students, staff and families! Let’s continue to work together to keep everyone safe.

Webster Elementary School in Livonia Public Schools School District has been recognized as an Exemplary High Performing Schools National Blue Ribbon School for 2020.

The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content. Congratulations to Webster students, staff & families, we are so proud of you!

DRIVING FOR PERFECTION
Congrats to the Livonia Public Schools Bus Mechanics team and the Transportation Department for receiving a perfect 100% Michigan State Police Safety Inspection rating, following a multi-week review of every bus in our fleet.

We are grateful for this high-quality professional team for ensuring our buses are running in tip-top shape to safely transport our students!
The mission of the LPS Education Foundation is to enlarge the resources available to the school district, which will foster and expand educational opportunities for programs impacting students by building effective collaborations.

LPS Education Foundation Clicks to Second Phase of Technology Giving

The LPS Education Foundation is synonymous with “giving” in Livonia Public Schools. The local non-profit is changing with these pandemic times and kicking off a community-wide fundraising campaign called the 2020 Initiative. In a normal school year, the Foundation hosts a well-attended luncheon as well as the ever-popular Bounce Back to School event to raise funds to support its Classroom Grants Program and the Competitive Edge College Savings Program for families. Because these large gatherings are not permitted at this time, the Foundation has shifted its focus.

The 2020 Initiative will support the purchase of Chromebooks and/or laptops, plus 120 “hot spots” for students to connect to the internet from home.

“This is Phase 2 of our efforts to provide technology for our students,” said Lorna Durand, President of the LPS Education Foundation. “In the spring, we launched a very successful campaign called Bridging the Digital Divide, which enabled us to provide 80 hot spots for students through a community-wide fundraising effort. Although most students have returned to in-person instruction, the needs still exist for our virtual learners.”

Approximately 4,000 of the district’s 14,000 students opted for the fully online option called Livonia Virtual. This is a long-term option for students to continue learning remotely from home.

“We are finding that there remains a gap, in terms of access to technology,” added Durand. “So, we are pleased to continue our efforts to provide for students who need a device and/or access to the internet so they can have a seamless experience in their virtual learning.”

While the 2020 Initiative will run from October 26 through December 15, a large focus will be on Giving Tuesday, a globally recognized day that shines a light on giving generously to support community non-profits.

This year, Giving Tuesday is December 1 and the Foundation has committed to matching all donations up to $10,000. This is in addition to $10,000 in seed money that has been earmarked by the Foundation as it strives toward its $40,000 fundraising goal for the 2020 Initiative.

Donations in any amount are welcome; however, the Foundation has specified the following amounts for the following purposes:
• $20 buys one month of hotspot service
• $240 buys a year of hotspot service
• $350 sponsors one Chromebook
• $725 sponsors one laptop computer with software

All purchased equipment will be the property of Livonia Public Schools.

To donate, please visit the Foundation’s website at www.lpsfoundation.org.

CURRENT FOUNDATION CORPORATE DONORS

- Alpha USA
- Bellagio Homes - Rico Sauve
- The Big Smile Orthodontics
- Bill Brown Ford, Inc.
- Cheryl Bowker Agency – Allstate Insurance
- Community Financial Credit Union
- DFCU Financial
- Feldman Chevrolet of Livonia
- Livonia AM Rotary
- Livonia Jaycees
- Livonia Kiwanis Early Risers
- LPS Employees
- LPS PTAs/PTSAs
- Keller Williams Realty
- MacFarland and Company Home Sales
- Masco Corporation
- Michigan Educational Credit Union
- Parkside Credit Union
- Rock Out Entertainment
- Roush Industries
- St. Mary Mercy Livonia
- St. Mary’s Cultural & Banquet Center
- TCF Bank, Plymouth Rd., Livonia
- ZF TRW Automotive